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THE MUSLIM VOICE

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"Well... I'm a Muslim too"

New Beginnings and the Importance of Islam Awareness Week

By Solange Waithe

While the future of Islam Awareness Week (IAW) seems to be the main concern of its organizers (they are already thinking about improvements for IAW 1995), I am actually reminiscing about my first Islam Awareness Week, IAW 1993. You see, that marked the beginning of my "public existence" as a Muslim.

I have decided to write this part of my story so that I might illustrate what I perceive to be the importance of an event like Islam Awareness Week for "new, inactive and/or previously unknown" Muslims on the university campus.

I believe that the University of Toronto Muslim community has a lot to offer those of its members who are willing to get involved with its work, however that may be. To do this, one first has to know that it *exists*. Otherwise, it is possible for you to to imagine that, "Okay, there are probably other Muslims at the university, I've seen a few, but they have their own business, and how could I know where to find them?"

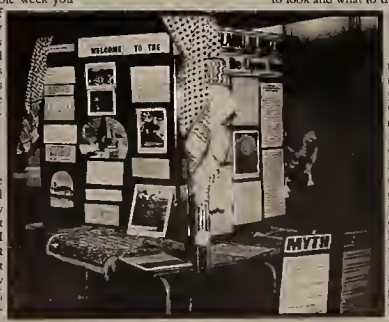
When your faculty or classes are apparently unpopular with other Muslim students and you see only few of them, sometimes none, it is not impossible to remain unwillingly isolated from the rest of the Muslim community...at least for a few lonely months. But when Islam Awareness Week comes around --- unless you never walk through Sidney Smith Hall or the lobby of the Medical Sciences Building and during the whole week you do not see any of the terribly loud-coloured flyers about IAW posted all around campus --- you cannot miss it: IAW and the Muslims are definitely here.

Looking Back: IAW 1993

Now, back to me and IAW 1993. I was then a "new Muslim", well at least newer than I am now. I did not know much about Muslims. All I knew was of Islam itself, as revealed and confirmed in the wonderful guide to life which I had found in the public library: the Qur'an and the French translation of the meaning of its verses. As I was reading it, I was travelling the path from darkness to light.

My heart went from the shaky conviction of a new found belief in God and God's oneness, to the acceptance of the Qur'anic message given to Prophet Muhammed (peace be on him). And so in my heart, I became a Muslim, without publicly saying so.

I did not say anything because I was somewhat afraid of other Muslims, and of not being accepted in the Muslim community. I was apprehensive about their reaction if I were to tell them, "Well...I'm a Muslim too". "What do you mean?"; I imagined them saying, "we are the Muslims, not you!" as they would sneer and turn away from me, the jealous keepers of their faith?



And it was fairly easy to hide my identity from people, since I did not yet cover myself above the neck. Nor did I perform Salat, since I did not yet know the entire prayer ritual. I was learning about it through books before I attempted it myself, waiting until I knew how to do it properly. But it was hard finding books on my own, I did not really know where to look and what to trust.

In First Year

By that time, I was in my first year of University, registered in a faculty whose Muslims could be counted on the fingers of one hand. I had not told them about my religious convictions. My loneliness and isolation as a Muslim continued for a long while.

Until one day, experimentally, I whispered to a Muslim student in my faculty, "Well...I'm a Muslim too". To my complete surprise, she exclaimed delightfully, immediately transmitting the happy news to a brother who was in our class. Both were stunned and so happy, enquiring about my needs and what help they could give me. For the first time, I was experiencing interaction with other Muslims as a Muslim myself.

I was shocked by their welcoming attitude, and the wall of apprehension that I had built around myself was crumbling down. Still, my contacts were remained very few and my opportunities, limited.

The Turning Point

Then came IAW 1993. Sidney Smith Hall was full of interesting booths, fascinating books and students to whom one could talk about Islam. Still terribly shy, I tried to walk by the displays unnoticed. But the brother from my class was sitting at the front booth with the Muslim Students' Association phone list in hand and he called me over.

He made me add my name and telephone number to the list, explaining that hundreds of Muslim students at the University of Toronto were part of the MSA, but some of them did not have their name on the list, like myself and others who believed they were alone as Muslim students here. But as my name was now on the list, I would be notified of everything that was going on for Muslims students.

Before I left he gave me a book about Salat, the Muslim prayer ritual, about which I needed to know so much. After giving it to me, he asked me if he could borrow it some time, because there were some things in there that would be good for him to go over too.

I then realized that "older" Muslims too needed to learn more about Islam. I was not alone in my need to learn and I was not alone as a Muslim on campus. I had an extremely helpful book that gave clear, simple but complete instruction and information about everything related to Salat, from the necessary ablution, to the supplications that finish such a prayer. With this book I learned to pray. I had friends, Muslim friends, on campus who also knew me as a Muslim. And most importantly, I had my name and telephone number on a piece of paper, along with

(Continued on page 5)

Zawaj az-Zahra

A Sudanese Marriage Program... For North America?

By Umar Abdul-Hamid

The Islamic movement in Sudan has always been a source of controversy. The movement and its leader, Hassan al-Turabi, have set many precedents which other Islamic movements have followed worldwide. One such revolutionary initiative is the *Zawaj az-Zahra* marriage program.

In Arabic *zawaj* means marriage, and az-*Zahra*, the Radiant, was the name given to the Prophet Muhammad's daughter Fatima. This program is based on a Sudanese tradition called *Urs al-kora*, which means "the low-cost, blessed marriage."

The Idea

The idea of the program is to sponsor group marriages between women and men who are active in the movement and are dedicated Islamic workers; in fact the leadership of the movement encourages young Islamic activists to marry early and within the movement, so as to strengthen and institutionalize Islamic activism at the family level.

These couples are married in large ceremonies, in which dozens of them are married at once.

The Islamic movement, along with its well-established financial institutions and some of its wealthy members subsidize the cost of these marriages. This support, however, does not end at the conclusion of the *nikah* ceremony.

The newly-weds are also given subsidized or free housing for a full year, as well as other financial support based on need. This allows the couple to start their new life with fewer headaches. And it is believed that thousands of people have been married through this program.

The benefits of this program are apparent: by supporting the couple in the initial stages of marriage, the financial concerns that prevent many young Muslims from getting married early are removed.

In North America

The implementation of this rich social enterprise, in the opinion of this author, is much needed in North America, where the issue of marriage is serious and complicated. This is especially true given the hostile environment, with its many temptations.

Such a program must be examined by Islamic organizations in this continent, since it could reap many benefits. Too many are being lost from the *deen* because of the dilemma of marriage. The Sudanese *Zawaj al Zahra* experience could be one solution to this problem.

Not Despairing

Finally, we must remember to trust in Allah that He will provide and help us overcome all difficulties. As Allah says in the Qur'an:

"And among his wonders is this: He creates for you mates out of your own kind, so that you might incline towards them, and He engenders love and tenderness between you: in this, behold, are messages for people who think." (Surah Rum, 21)

Furthermore, the Prophet Muhammad has said:

"Three [people] are entitled to Allah's help: the fighter (*mujahid*) in the cause of Allah, the trustee, and the person who marries [for the protection of her or his modesty]." (narrated by Tirmidhi)

Umar Abdul-Hamid is from Sudan, and studies in Toronto.

What is The Muslim Voice?

The Muslim Voice is published by the Muslim Students' Association at the University of Toronto and distributed across North America. It seeks to present Muslim perspectives on issues of concern to all of us.

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Jihad in America?

By Wael Haddara

Recently, I watched the PBS program *Jihad In America*. The program was well put together. It made extensive use of footage from "Islamic" activities and incorporated the opinions of a number of individuals associated with government, albeit former employees of the FBI and police, all of which served to deliver a forceful message.

There was only one minor flaw in that message: it was mostly false. But the balance of truth and falsehood have rarely been of concern in television. It clearly was not important in this program either. Having said that, it is only fair that the program actually be discussed in terms of what misportrayals were made. This discussion will constitute the larger portion of this essay. In closing, I will also discuss the broader implications of this and similar programs for North American societies, specifically Canada.

The Portrayal

The program made use of three of four individuals who spoke about the Islamic Threat. They spoke of an international network of terrorists being supported both financially as well as through recruits from the American heartland. Two things immediately come to surface - None of the individuals interviewed as expert witnesses have any official capacity. There was a former ambassador at large for counter terrorism, a former FBI official, and a former CIA official. Secondly, they spoke of what 'we' knew about Islamic terrorist networks in the U.S. including specific locations, names, and organizations. They also spoke of proof. If in fact the law enforcement agencies have such incontrovertible proof that such activities are being conducted unlawfully within the United States, why has action not been taken already? Why is it that so many months after the World Trade Centre bombing have no further arrests been made?

Proofs and Arrests

There are two possible reasons. Either there is no proof or worse (or better) yet, there is no terror network ready to strike at the heart of western civilization.

The program also made extensive use of footage of Muslim activities such as conferences, camps and lectures. Most of the footage was in Arabic. Translations were kindly provided. However, the translations fell into the classical error of conveying the meanings of the individual words, but not the meaning of the sentence.

The most prominent example was a speech written by Dr. Sami Eryan, Chairman of the Islamic Committee for Palestine. The program had spent much effort trying to convince viewers that the Committee was but a front for a terrorist group called the Islamic Jihad. The Chairman, Dr. Eryan, had gone to considerable lengths to point out that ICP is involved in humanitarian and educational efforts only.

The program then found a speech (in Arabic) published in the newsletter of ICP. The speech spoke of "the river of blood (that) will continue to flow" and of going from "butchery to butchery; massacre to massacre, and jihad to jihad." In the context of the program, this meant that ICP - or the Islamic Jihad - must ensure that the

"river of blood" will not stop, and that Muslims must go from "butchery to butchery ..."

Macabre

The buildup to this point was very clever. The maneuver was executed with great care. The portrayal was brilliantly macabre, and completely false. But that, as I have mentioned, is irrelevant. The speech was not talking about what Muslims must do; it was talking of what is being done to Muslims. It was talking about the river of Muslim blood that is flowing in Myanmar and Kashmir and Bosnia and the Philippines. It was talking about the butchering of Muslims in Kosovo and Bihac and Afghanistan. It was talking of the innumerable miseries that Muslims are undergoing in many places around the world, while the International Community deliberates, meets, and adjourns without resolution.

Another brilliant hit in exposing the terror elements in Muslim organizations, came in the form of a speech by a person named Tamim Adnani. The speech contained several militant statements like, "The Afghani (muhajidin) leaders say 'our struggle will be resolved in the trenches, not in hotels.'"

The statements are militant and they are quite justified. The United States certainly did not have many qualms about supplying those same people with arms and training. The Afghans saw their country invaded. They did what any human beings with the least shred of dignity would do: they fought to regain their country. And they resolved never to compromise, never to capitulate, never to surrender. Why is it considered noble and inspiring when Churchill says, "We shall defend our island whatever the cost may be. We shall fight on the beaches, we shall fight on the landing grounds, we shall fight in the fields and in the streets, we shall fight in the hills, we shall never surrender," but it is considered fanatical and terroristic when the Afghans say they will not compromise, and will fight to regain their land? Is there a hint of a double-standard at work here? God forbid!

Democracy in Action

Another remark in the program was made concerning how Hitler and Mussolini came to power through democracy and then abolished it. That is true. So then, what do we do? As governments whose interest it is (presumably) to promote democracy, how is it that we can avoid Muslim groups from reaching power through democracy and then end up abolishing it?

The answer is very simple. Do not allow democracy to exist in the first place. Since there is no democracy, we need not worry about the Islamists abolishing it. This may seem like a twisted piece of logic, but that, in fact, has been the underlying principle guiding the foreign policy of the United States over the past forty years. Thus we find that the regimes supported by the U.S. are mainly dictatorships. Some are even under military rule. Examples abound: Egypt, Iraq (before the Gulf War), Iran under the Shah, the Persian Gulf states (monarchie), Jordan (monarchy), Morocco (monarchy), Tunisia, and Algeria.

Objective Reporting

Recently, I watched the PBS program "Jihad In America." The program was well put together. There was only one minor flaw ... It was mostly false.

Many of these countries have an abominable record of human rights abuses. The abuses are against Islamists. They include arbitrary arrest, detention without trial, torture using the most barbaric methods and other abuses. Of course, not to be excluded from the list of countries with a record of human rights abuses is Israel. Although it is a democracy for Israelis, it has conducted a military occupation of 2 million Palestinians in the West Bank and the Gaza strip for the past 25 years.

Algeria

Of all those countries, Algeria deserves special consideration. Until 1989, Algeria was a one-party state. Due to a number of factors, most prominently economic ones, the president at the time was pressured into holding elections. State-wide elections were conducted over two stages.

The first stage was in December 1991. It gave the Islamic Salvation Front a clear majority. The second stage, to be held in January 1992 was expected to give the Islamic Salvation Front an absolute majority in the Algerian Parliament.

Those elections never took place. The Army moved in, suspended elections, declared martial law and proceeded to detain scores of ISF activists. There are an estimated 40,000 detainees in concentration-camp-like centres set up in the desert. Civil war subsequently broke up and is still raging.

What was the response of the West to this gross violation of democratic principles? Nothing. The United States viewed "with concern" the developments, while France actually applauded the move. All of which serves to support the thesis that the best way of ensuring that Islamists do not abolish democracy in Muslim countries, is to abolish it ourselves, and ensure that dictatorships thrive.

There are many other such misrepresentations in the program I cannot discuss them all. However, it is important to note that this was not a case of objective and accurate reporting. At best it was sloppy, paranoid reporting. At worst, it was a clear case of hate mongering.

"A mature people ... does not populate its political world with demons and fairies, sinners and saviours." Emmet John Hughes may have witnessed something similar *to Jihad In America* before making this observation.

It is important for us to realize that the complexities of today no longer allow us to make sweeping statements about the 'good guys' and the 'bad guys'. In an ever-shrinking world, we must resist the temptation to demonize other peoples. What we do here today has effects that go far beyond our borders. It portrays an image that other people will use to judge us. Furthermore, they will base their relations with us on this image.

The United States

The United States, in my opinion, has done irreparable harm to its image in the world today. It is no longer perceived as an honest player in international politics. Its policies are seen as being based on a poor understanding of international events and history as well as being administered by a government ever under the pressure of interest groups. What John Adams, the second American president said of Napoleon two hundred years ago, is true today of the United States: "I do not think that any conqueror before him has ever accumulated such a great measure of hate against himself. There is, on the other hand, an admiration for him equally great. But I have yet to see the man who regards him with love."

Aside from the international implications, we must remember that there are now between 6 to 9 million Muslims in North America who are Canadian and American. And unless we wish to inaugurate a new era of McCarthyism, we must resist the urge to demonize. Our experiences show that it takes little to intitate a wave of hate crimes against ethnic minorities. The example of the Jewish and the Afro-American communities is a potent one. Already there has been an increase in incidents of vandalism and destruction of Muslim mosques and schools. A few days after the broadcast of the PBS program Jihad In America, one of the schools featured in the program was attacked by vandals and left unusable.

Canadian Realities

For better or for worse, Canada's realities are inseparable from those of the United States. We share television, entertainment, sports, and much more. During the era of Brian Mulroney, we even shared foreign policy. But where the reality of the United States turns to ethnic strife, our realities must be divorced from theirs. We must maintain the atmosphere of respect for multiculturalism that is our heritage. Without that, we will end up where the United States stands now in terms of its ethnic minorities. There is a great responsibility for journalists to actively safeguard this heritage.

Wael Haddara is a more than just a reclusive Meds student at Queen's; he writes for The Muslim Voice regularly.

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The Muslim Voice seeks to present Muslim perspectives on issues of concern to students. The majority of the articles are written by and for university students.

In 1993-94, we had 18 issues of the newsletter. Our circulation started at 250 and rose to 5000 copies by the end of the 1993-94 school year. This year, our circulation has been 8000 per issue.

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Reflections on Life After School

Redefining our conception of youth

By Amer Mustafa

I have now been out of school for a year and in that time I have gone from being a single student to becoming a married, working individual, wal-Hamdulillah. It is at this time that I would like to reflect on some of the changes that I have gone through.

The Differences

Firstly, there is just as much work, perhaps even more, than school, especially if you work in your own business. A major difference, however, is the lack of the pressures of homework, deadlines and exams.

Secondly, there is a great increase in emotional stability with marriage. This is one of the blessings from Allah where He gives us peace and tranquillity in our spouses.

The Confusion

The biggest confusion, however, is that of identity. Where does one fit in terms of Islamic work? Do you participate in Muslim youth activities or in *mainstream, adult* activities?

It is difficult to remain involved at university since you are not there all the time and may not be able to relate to all the issues and happenings on campus. At the same time, many of the community-based organisations that are run by adults seem to be boring and stuffy. They lack that vibrancy and enthusiasm that you find when working with other youth.

Youth

When I think about the word youth I think it means a person who is energetic, vibrant, and fearless in the struggle for some cause. This energy often takes the form of "pranks" or little jokes.

The pranks of a Muslim youth often carry a powerful message. An example of this is the Prophet Ibrahim. At a young age he destroyed all of the idols and left one standing. When asked by the people if he knew anything about it, he told them to ask the idol that was still standing. This may be described as a prank with a point.

But I do not think youth needs to be described in terms of age. An old Arabic proverb suggests that youth lasts until the age of 40. But today it is difficult to find many youth today over the age of 25.

Beyond Young Age

I don't ever want to stop considering myself a youth. However, I have begun to define that *cause* in broader terms. Just one year ago, I would have believed that Islamic work had to be related to the da'wah (call) of Islam. Now I find myself thinking that Islamic work encompasses all of your life, personal as well as public, as an individual, as well as in a group.

Thus, to do well on an exam for the sake of Allah would be Islamic work just as much as sitting at the MSA table at Robarts Library. Today, I think that earning a halal living and trying to build a Muslim business is also Islamic work.

The Business World

In the business world, you find people interested only in making their own business prevail over others. Greed seems to be the underlying motivation.

This is in stark contrast to activist university life where you are surrounded by action-oriented people who are usually struggling for a cause rather than to further their own personal wealth.

It is difficult to fit into these circles and to discuss things like RRSPs, insurance, mortgages, interest rates, corporate mergers, employee benefits, and so on.

Not to mention the fact that half of these things are haram. What is the cost of not knowing or caring about these things? Well, it could mean alienation from the adult or business world. This would appear to impact on my ability to be successful in either of these worlds. This is just an illusion, however.

Redefining Youth

At this point in my life I feel that I need to update my definition of youth. When you are in school, you are a *young youth*, who struggles for a cause but does not really have much to lose in the way of acceptance, wealth, or safety for their families. In fact, as a youth, sometimes it is fashionable or positive to be against the status quo.

As an *older youth*, you have a family (or at least a spouse) that is your responsibility, and the costs of being different or against the status quo appear to be higher. So the main difference between a young youth and an older youth is that the stakes are higher. Perhaps this is how our families are a test for us.

However, the struggle must continue no matter how high the stakes rise. After all, Muslim youth in other places around the world are putting their lives on the line every day. Are their stakes too high? I do not think so. When the reward is Paradise, the stakes can never be too high.

So I guess I will just feel my way around for a while in this world of adults. I will try to find those youthful souls and link up with them and maybe, as a group, we can find more youth.

Then maybe when we have our little group of Muslim youth, others will find us as well. Then we can form our own organisations, unions, and guilds. Graduating students who are entering the working world can then join us and together we will be even stronger, insha Allah.

Then, perhaps we could link up with other Muslim youth in other countries and help each other in our problems... Anyway, I better get started.

Amer Mustafa is an old MSA U of Toronto hack. He is very much in the 'real world' now.

"Towards an Islamic Renaissance"

Jawad Shah delivers profound, moving lecture

By Zahir Arshad Bacchus & Faraz Rabbani

Jawad Shah gave a moving lecture on "The Renaissance of Islam" in the December 1994 MAYA Convention. The lecture had a profound message to all of us.

Jawad Shah [an Islamic activist based in Winnipeg who started the Peacenet halaqa system, and is in his mid-20s] talked about the changes needed for Muslims to become a unified, God-fearing and dynamic community that can effect real change.

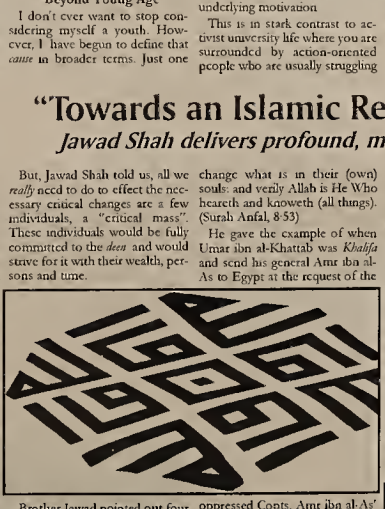
Brother Jawad mentioned that the terminology used in the Qur'an for renaissance is *tajdid* or rejuvenation. This word and idea is found throughout the Qur'an, and so are the descriptions the Allah gives of believers as being a society of growth and change. He mentioned the analogy that is found in the Qur'an of the believers:

"And the likeness of those who spend their substance seeking to please Allah and to strengthen their souls is as a garden high and fertile: heavy rain falls on it but makes it yield a double increase of harvest and if it receives not heavy rain light moisture sufficeth it. Allah seeth well whatever ye do." (Surah Baqara, 2: 265)

He went on the say that our communities aren't like this garden that Allah talks about. There are so many faults in our communities: fighting between the Imam and the Executive in mosques; fighting between parents and children; fighting based on our ethnicity, and so on.

Critical Mass

But, Jawad Shah told us, all we *really* need to do to effect the necessary critical changes are a few individuals, a "critical mass". These individuals would be fully committed to the *deen* and would strive for it with their wealth, persons and time.



Brother Jawad pointed out four areas in which Muslims are suffering, individually and collectively. If we cure these problems, then changes would, as promised by Allah, be widescale. Then the believers would be like the beautiful garden that Allah describes in the Qur'an.

Roots of the Muslim Crisis

These four areas that are the roots of Muslim crisis are: A crisis of thought; A crisis of organization and planning; a crisis of *iman* (faith and belief); and crisis of *jihad* (striving in the way of Allah).

He further goes on to say that if we cure that crisis of iman, purifying and strengthening our hearts, then the first two crises would not occur, and we would readily accept the fourth challenge (jihad).

"Because Allah will never change the grace which He hath bestowed on a people until they change what is in their (own) souls: and verily Allah is He Who heareth and knoweth (all things). (Surah Anfal, 8:53)

He gave the example of when Umar ibn al-Khattab was *Khalifa* and send his general Amr ibn al-As to Egypt at the request of the oppressed Copts. Amr ibn al-As' army was seriously outnumbered and Amr requested help from Umar. Umar, when he read Amr's request was amazed that the Muslims were taking this long to open up Egypt.

"Your hearts have changed"

Umar's reply was that the problem wasn't that the Muslims were outnumbered -- they always had been -- but that their hearts had changed; they needed to follow the methodology prescribed by Allah to achieve their goals. So Umar sent four of the older Companions of the Prophet to instruct them in the true religion of Allah and change their hearts.

Sure enough, Egypt was soon won. What would Umar say to us today, a billion Muslims?

The solution is attaining that critical mass of committed Muslims prepared to take responsibility to train ourselves and to work consistently for Islam.

"I yearn to see my brethren"

The Prophet talked of such people: "Glad tidings of *Jannah* (Heaven) to those individuals who see me and believe in me." Then he said, "Glad tidings of *Jannah* to those individuals who believe in me but they have never seen me." And he repeated this seven times, as recorded by Imam Ahmad in his *Musnad*.

As he stood before the grave and as he looked around him at the Companions standing with him, tears came down from his eyes. He said: "I have a deep desire, a yearning to see my brethren." So the Companions asked, "O Messenger of Allah, are we not your brethren? We're here, we're with you."

So the Prophet, peace be upon him, said: "No, you are my companions. My brethren are those individuals who are prepared to believe in me and to follow the Way and to Strive and Struggle in the Way (of Allah), but who have never seen me."

This is the importance of the task at hand. Can we be of that brethren? Allah tells us:

"They ask thee: 'When will that time come?' Say to them. 'Perhaps it is very near.'"

Zahir Bacchus is the treasurer of the MSA U Toronto. He is our resident razor-tongue. He has listened to Jawad Shah's lecture 6 times already.

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Culture and Assimilation

A few thoughts on becoming a regular Canadian

By Munazzah Shirwani

It is easy to have stereotypes of people For example, Muslims seem to be these foreigners who don't know any English and don't care much for behaving like regular people.

Such a stereotype has two problems First of all, despite many recent arrivals from the Caribbean, South Asia and the Middle East, Muslims have been here since the 1800s if not earlier. This was when an American Muslim of Scottish descent migrated north and settled in Canada Muslims have been in the United States for even longer. Second of all, what is the definition of a 'regular Canadian' anyway? Here's a little story to prove my point A man was fuming over the recent rise of immigration "Immigration should have been banned years ago!" he exclaimed furiously. The native gentleman seated next to him replied, *"Centuries ago!"* (courtesy *The Globe and Mail*). Tius anecdote just goes to show that defining who has the right to label whom is by no means clear cut

Assimilation

But however many slogans of multiculturalism may be shouted through the loudspeakers of government policy, people still feel threatened by the foreignness of Islam and Muslims. This is ironic since the nature of Islam is such that Muslims assimilate the environment they live in. This may be difficult to believe especially if a Muslim refuses to take part in the lottery or join in the odd alcoholic drink

This is easier to believe, though, when one sees that Muslims have lived and do live in every part of the world, whether they be the Africans whose ancestors were forcibly brought to America or the Chinese Muslims on the Silk Route, or the Bosnians in the Balkans If one were to visit them, one could find traits in them common to all Muslims. At the same time they speak the local language, eat the same food, wear the local dress and play the local sports. Historically, Muslims have tried to selectively assimilate into the societies they have lived in.

Not Blindly

At the same time Muslims do not blindly choose to be 'like everyone else' (whoever this 'everyone else' is). Muslims believe that they would be doing a disservice not only to themselves but to the society they happen to live in. Muslims try consciously to mould their lifestyle on the single most important part of them; not their food, nor their clothes, but their beliefs.

So Muslims feel neither oppressed nor worthy of sympathy simply because they don't go to nightclubs or celebrate Christmas. That oh so frequently targeted piece of clothing, the hijab or woman's covering, is a case in point.

Choices & Identity

In Canada, the US and across the world many Muslim women make the religious choice to wear hijab, often going against the cultural beliefs of their parents So despite the latest backlash or two against Muslims, they are proud that they are able to live anywhere in the world and still hold fast to a universal identity--a universal culture--and feel liberated from the enslaving whims and fancies that the rest of society feels pressured to conform to.

By holding onto these universal moral values a Muslim chooses to veer away from what is harmful to society and steer towards improving it for the better

In this context, Muslims don't view multiculturalism as ethnocentric or history-bound, with each group clinging desperately onto its past. Rather, they see a multicultural society as one where morals, values and beliefs are upheld for the good of society, where people *live* their beliefs, rather than celebrating their culture.

Munazzah Shirwani is a student at the University of Toronto, and is actively involved in the MSA.

Getting Around on the Internet

By Nusheen Ameenuddin

Back in the days of the Roman empire, people communicated with each other over long distances by using human messengers. The idea was simple. Find the best marathon runner, give him the message to deliver, and wait several days for him to return with a reply. During the evolution of information systems, there have been carrier pigeons, the Pony Express and so on until the advent of the computer age.

Alhamdulillah, information can now be relayed in a matter of nanoseconds. The information superhighway makes it possible for people on opposite ends of the globe to exchange ideas without even leaving their personal computers.

When I first heard about the Internet, I thought it was little more than a fancy electronic mailing system. But my five months as a netter have shown me how vast and wonderful the Internet truly is. I discovered that the information superhighway had numerous lanes for Muslims with everything from Islamic newsgroups to informal discussion circles.

I was suddenly able to talk to Muslims in Australia and the United Kingdom with the touch of a key. I even found that someone halfway across the world was originally from the same street in the same city of the same country where I was born. SubhanAllah! The electronic sisterhood and brotherhood that exists is amazing

I found a great many kindred spirits, despite the fact that I have never even seen some of them. In addtuon to the friendships, my knowledge of Islam has increased, Alhamdulillah, because of the stimulating discussions on various nets. I also received invaluable advice on issues ranging from handshaking to my choice of a major.

Even though I am still a newbie (beginner) who has only explored a small sector of the Islamic Internet, I have been greatly enriched by the experience. The Internet provided me with a link to the Ummah.

We Muslims must utilize our resources, electronic and otherwise, to construct a strong network that will Insha'Allah turn the Ummah into a formidable collective power.

Then we will know the true impact of information systems as the Ummah becomes one solid, internationalized unit.

Nusheen Ameenuddin is rapidly becoming an Internet addict, but still needs help navigating Cyberspace. :-)

In Harmony We Seek

Frosh's experience of the 1994 MAYA Convention

By Shiraz Sheikh

O Mankind! Lo! We have created you male and female and have made you nations and tribes that ye may know one another. Lo! The noblest of you, in the sight of Allah, is the best in conduct. (49:13)

The seven of us left, packed into a rented mini-van with a modest amount of supplies including a bag full of sandwiches. We made clear our intentions for this trip: that we were going to this conference to serve Allah, through improving ourselves in Islam We elected an Amir for the trip, for this was the Prophet's way, and we left.

It was a long trip, and we spent the time reciting Qur'an, discussing issues that were related to Islam and just having fun. The long trip became an even longer trip as we were stopped at the American border

The Border

I had never been stopped at the border before, but I realized why of the seven, I was the only one without a beard, and they wanted to know why the other six had them They called out each of our names (except mine) and asked why we were going to Chicago "We're going to a conference," we replied, but what conference? They wanted to know, "Is it a religious conference? Surely there must be a reason why you're all together?"

"We're going to a Hamas rally!" I wanted to say, but I did not. It would not have helped the situation I admit I was on the edge a little, I had never been put in a situation like this before. Here we were, standing in front of armed border officers with images of Steve Emerson's *"Jihad In America"* swirling in their heads.

Our Amir calmly told them the truth, that we were attending the Muslim Arah Youtb Association conference, where they were going to hold lectures on all subjects of Islam. They asked us more questions but they had no reason to hold us up and they let us go.

Arriving

We arrived at the Hyatt Regency late that night. Chicago's New Eastside was dead. However, this five-star hotel and its vicinity was bustling with Muslim activity. The main floor of the hotel was ironically, decorated for Christmas...

But I never saw so many Muslims in my life! There were about six thousand or more. It was an entire Muslim city in there.

Everyone you passed said *As-Salamu 'Alaikum*. In the hallways, in the elavators, it was a completely new concept to me. Muslims of every nationality, and from all over the continent were present.

Feeling At Home

There were signs in Arabic everywhere, and though some of us could not speak in Arabic, I didn't care; seeing all this Muslim influence made me feel more at home then ever before

I have always had this feeling I had of not actually belonging. No matter how much I tried to fit in, I always felt that I was different from everyone else But I didn't feel at there. I don't know how to speak Arabic, but I felt more at home there then anywhere else

We would wake up together, before sunrise, and we would pray *fajr* with several thousand people. It was very different then my normal life. Back home I would wake up by myself, with the rest of the world seemingly asleep. I would look out my window, the street lights still on, and there would be no one in sight. Just me and my prayer rug, in the confines of my 10' by 10' room. But there it seemed like the room went on forever. The Grand Ball Room, where high ranking beurocrats and movie stars would usually meet, had been converted into a place of worship.

The Conference

The conference was divided into two, lectures in Arabic and lectures in English. We attended mostly the lectures in English, though we attended some Arabic lectures, for we had a Tunisian Muslim in our group. He would check to see if I was paying attention, and I promise I tried hard.

Yet I was always found myself distracted by the Arabic; I was entranced by it. It sounded like poetry to me. The lecturer could be talking about the weather, but it still would sound like poetry.

We would attend lectures all day, only to break to pray and to eat. During the meal times I would get to know the brothers more, and to meet other Muslims. One brother mentioned a very important point: If you were to come to these conferences and don't learn anything from the lectures, you would have still have benifited from meeting all these brothers and sisters.

When I got back home one of my friends asked how my vacation was. Before answering him I pondered his question. Was it a vacation? In some ways it was, a vacation from the harsh realities of where we really are. For five days we were not terrorists, or fundamentalists or *ostentatious*.

A Party

We had a party, an Islamic party and the media wasn't invited. But it really was a form of enlightenment, for me anyways.

When I graduated from high school, I had no clue as to what I wanted to do with my life and this had to do with the fact that I couldn't look beyond the boundaries of University; but the brothers here and my first conference have shown me another side of life that was always there, but I hadn't noticed it for it was covered up by worldly things.

I think the most important thing I realized is that it's not enough to pray five times a day or to fast during Ramadan but much, much more, and this I'm glad I learned especially now, not after I got a degree and expected complete satisfaction... only to be utterly disappointed.

Shiraz Sheikh is a first year student at U of Toronto and Assistant Editor for The Muslim Voice

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Feeling the Brotherhood

Struggling to Become a Better Muslim

By Mostafa Azzam

"Assalaamu 'alaikum"
May you find peace through submission to God.

Until this year, whenever I heard those words, they meant "Hi". Alhamdulillah, that is changing. And along with it are many other major changes in my life.

The Salaams

This year, I decided to take Arabic, MEI 270. Alhamdulillah, the benefit I have received from taking that course far exceeds just learning Arabic, which in itself will, InshaAllah, be a huge blessing.

Through having taking that course, I have met a group of brothers who have come to help me so much in the short time that I have known them, and who have come to mean so much to me.

It all started very early on in the year with a smile and a genuine greeting. A few classes into the year, a couple of the brothers in the class came up to me and greeted me, saying "Assalaamu 'alaikum". As I said, the greetings *of Assalaamu 'alaikum* ('Peace be upon you') that I am used to simply mean "Hi".

But when I receive salaam from the brothers I have gotten to know this year, it honestly feels like a sincere wish that I find peace through submission to God. Alhamdulillah, perhaps due to the greetings I receive from my brothers, God is, InshaAllah, guiding me to that submission and peace.

Cookies and Sipping Tea

The brothers I had met immediately made me feel as though I was one of them. They were very quick in inviting me out for tea and cookies and playfully teaching me about the art of properly sipping tea very loudly, to 'savour it optimally'. We all need a little silliness to keep a well-balanced life. And they also told me about regular prayers at FIS, by Robarts Library.

I had never really had any brothers reach out to me before, so it was very nice feeling a part of a group. Most of us need some sort of community to which we can belong, and it is so important that we as Muslims reach out to our brothers and sisters before they are sucked into some other (likely destructive) affiliation.

Alhamdulillah, through this community I have come to belong to, I am learning the spirit of brotherhood -- a concept really quite foreign to me. It was so strange to me seeing these brothers so casually sharing with each other; buying things for each other when they could barely afford to do so, sharing their lunches as though they didn't each bring their own individual lunches, but as though there was one big lunch for everybody. Whatever happened to the good old greediness I knew so well?

Getting to know these brothers and feeling a part of an actual brotherhood has been such a wonderful experience. I had met several of the brothers last year, but I really hadn't had that much to do with them. Who had the time? What with all the TV I watched and all the girls with whom I socialized. May Allah forgive me for using so little of my time to serve Him.

Good Enough

I really hardly strived in the way of God but I felt I was good enough. Whether they realize it or not, a very important lesson my brothers have helped me learn - without condemning me or even saying a single word against me - is that I am not good enough, and I must always work at being a better Muslim.

In the past I was quite content with my level of *taqwa* (God-consciousness). I was fairly God-fearing and I was a good guy. Hey, I was a great guy! My surroundings had me believing I was a fabulously moral person: no alcohol, no sex before marriage, and praying five prayers a day (though rarely five times a day). That was more than enough; how many people did I know who could make these claims?

I was surrounded by casual sex, casual drinking, casual 'everything forbidden', so anyone who didn't participate in these things was an angel. Of course, my biggest mistake was likely that with which I surrounded myself. Having had all the messages of the Shaitan pounded into my psyche far more than the message of Islam, my reverence and fear of Allah didn't begin to approach the level at which they should have. I did have some fear and reverence for God, but this somehow managed to be suppressed, hidden somewhere underneath my 'cool' clothes and my strut.

Alhamdulillah, with the help of my brothers and the infinite mercy of Ar-Raheem (The All-Merciful), I am, InshaAllah, becoming more humble and am making changes which I didn't expect to make before I was old and grey.

I don't think I really accepted the fact that only God knows whether or not I will actually live to be old and grey. Having been of the mentality that now is the time for total freedom and the time for repentance and morality would come when I was older, I am finally beginning to realize that I may not become older. Any one of us could die today and we'd better be prepared when we go because there's no reason to expect a make-up test for the test of life. *[You'd never know Mostafa was a Physics Major after that beautiful metaphor, would you?* Ed*]*

Questions

Though I am learning, I don't know very much about Islam. But the brothers have raised my interest in it and have helped increase my Islamic knowledge as a result. More importantly, they have always taken the time to answer any questions I have. No matter how basic or obvious the question, the brothers have never made me uncomfortable about asking such a stupid question. And no matter how busy, they are they always take the time to give me as complete an answer as they possibly can.

There are so many changes I have made this year through God's mercy and with the help of these brothers, I can't even begin to list specific ones. I have become more humble; my faith has strengthened; my heart has softened; my knowledge and my da'wah have increased; my life has become so much more Islamic. I beg Allah for His forgiveness because I have so wasted my life and I beg for His continued Mercy.

Though my knowledge and understanding of Islam are still minimal, I do know that the way these brothers have acted towards me captures the spirit of brotherhood and the spirit of Islam. InshaAllah, may we all be as kind and charitable (charity not necessarily having to do with money, of course) as these brothers have been with me.

Jazaakum Allahu khairan, my brothers, for your da'wah and for your brotherhood. Assalaamu 'alaikum.

The Moose roams U Toronto. He is in 2nd year.

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Dealing with People
Hadith of the Prophet

From Ibn 'Umar: The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said.

"The Muslim who meets with people and endures any harm they may do is better than he who does not mix with them and does not endure any harm they may do."(Tirmidhi)

Jabir bin 'Abdullah said that Allah's Messenger (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said:

"Allah is not merciful to him who is not merciful to people." (Bukhari, Muslim)

From Abu Hurara: Allah's Messenger (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said:

"He who does not thank people does not thank Allah." (Ahmad, Tirmidhi)

From Usama: Allah's Messenger (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said:

"When someone has had good done to him and says to the doer 'May Allah reward you' *(Jazakallah Khayr)*, he has done the utmost in praise." (Tirmidhi)

From Anas: Allah's Messenger (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said.

"By Him in whose hand is my soul, a servant (of Allah) does not believe (truly) until he likes for his brother what he likes for himself." (Bukhari,Muslim)

From al-Miqdam bin Ma'dikarib: "The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said:

When a man loves his brother, he should tell him that he loves him." (Abu Dawud, Tirmidhi)

From Abu Ayyub al-Ansari. Allah's Messenger (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said:

"It is not right for a man to abandon his brother for more than three days." (Bukhari,Muslim)

Jabir said that Allah's Messenger (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said:

"If one makes excuses to his brother, but he does not excuse him or accept his apology, he is as sinful as one who takes an unjust tax." (Baihaqi)

Compiled by Abdullah Haydar.

Well, I am a Muslim too...

(Continued from page 1)

hundreds of other Muslims.

The Invitations

Then the invitations started coming: an MSA activity here, another there. A sister would call me on the telephone to tell me about what activities were coming up for Muslims on campus. But I was still very timid and backed out of all these invitations, partly because I was uncomfortable about not covering my head.

I knew modestly covering myself this way would be the Islamically correct thing to do but many things held me back. For one thing, I would not be able to decide if I wanted to declare that, "Well...I'm a Muslim too..." or not if flowing down from my head was a large scarf, the result being the unmistakable look of a Muslim woman.

This dress would make my Islam public, for everyone to see. This was hard for me to take on, even though I remember looking longingly at the properly dressed Muslim women on the street, thinking that they were the most beautiful women in the world --- not because of the scarves themselves, but because of the fact that they were wearing them, many with their backs straight. There was just "something" about them.

The Next Call

Finally, there came another call: there was going to be a MSA pizza night before the winter break. Encouraged by the sister on the phone, who offered to bring a scarf for me if that would make me more comfortable, I finally mustered the courage to accept and I went. That night, I socialized for the first time *as a Muslim*, discovering the reason why people referred to their fellow Muslims as "sisters" and "brothers".

This was my introduction into the Muslim community and without IAW, I would probably not have had this opportunity, God only knows. And this all goes to show how a person can miss out on a lot if they think that there is no Muslim community at U of T. If nothing else, IAW takes care of dismissing that notion.

Now my copy of the book that brother gave me is in the hands of another new Muslim, whom I met while I was sitting at a booth at the IAW 1994 Sidney Smith display. She who also discovered then and there that there were other Muslims on campus and added her name to the MSA phone list. . the work continues, with God's help.

Thanks

Now that I have the chance to do so, I want to give the following thanks for all these wonderful opportunities. thanks to God, for making me a Muslim and setting things up this way. Thanks to the sister and brother from my first year class who gave me my first welcome into the Muslim community and again to the brother for having *made* me put my name on that list and given me that book. Thanks also to the sister on the phone who encouraged me to go to that pizza night and whose scarf became my first Islamic head covering just over a year ago. And thanks to all the sisters and brothers who are active in the MSA, particularly to those who worked on IAW 1993.

Let the IAW tradition continue, God willing, and may you all be rewarded well for these and other efforts in furthering Islam. Ameen.

Solange Wuthe is a 2nd-year student of Anthropology and Middle East and Islamic Studies. She is an active member of the Muslim community at the University of Toronto.

Islamic Aqeedah

The Muslim Belief System

BY SHEIKH FAISAL ABDUR-RAZAK

This is part one of a multi-part series on the Islamic Aqeedah (belief system; creed) and its significance.

Sheikh Faisal Abdur-Razak is a graduate of the King AbdulAziz University, Saudi Arabia

He is the Executive Director of the Forum for Islamic Studies of Canada; he is Assistant Coordinator of the Council of Imams of Canada

He is the author of many books, including: *Teach Yourself Arabic Reading; Zikrullah the Remembrance of Allah;* and *The Book of Death.*

Praise be to Almighty Allah, Lord of the entire Universe. In His Hand is the Dominion of the heavens and the earth. All Sovereignty belongs to Him, and all Praise is only for Him.

All His prescribed Laws and what he has decreed are from His wisdom. He does whatever He wills and commands whatever he wishes

I testify that there is none to be worshipped but Almighty Allah. He is One, He has no partners, and there is none like unto Him.

And I testify that Muhammad is His Servant and Messenger, He is the last and Seal of the Prophets, and the best of all creations.

May the Peace and Blessings of Almighty Allah be upon him, his family, his companions, and all those who follow him until the Day of Judgement.

Our Purpose in Life

Almighty Allah reveals to us in the Holy Qur'an

"I have not created Jinn and Mankind except to serve Me..." [Quran, 51:56]

"And to every people We sent a prophet to convey to them that they must serve Allah alone and avoid all evil (*Taaghoot*)..." [16.36]

"Come, let me rehearse to you (tell you) what your Lord has forbidden you, namely: that you do not associate anything with Him, Be good to your parents; kill not your children on a plea of want, for We provide sustenance for you and for them; Come not near to indecent deeds, whether openly or secretly, And take not life which Allah has made sacred, except by way of justice and law: Thus does He command you that you may learn Il'*adom* and *Discern* And approach not the wealth of the orphan, except to improve it, until he attains maturity; Give full measure and full weight, with justice; We do not place a burden on any soul, but that which it can bear, And whenever you speak, speak justly, even if a near relative is involved; And fulfil the Covenant of Allah; Thus does He command you that you may *remember.*

Verily, this is My Way leading straight, so follow it. Follow not other paths, for they will scatter you away from His Path. Thus does He command you that you may be *righteous.*" [6:151-153]

Parts of Islam:

Aqeedah & Ahkam

Islam may be broadly divided into two parts:

Firstly the theoretical, or the Creed of Islam called the *Aqeedah.* This includes the knowledge of *Iman* (Faith), and the knowledge of *Tawheed* (the Oneness and Unity of Allah).

Secondly, the practical aspects, the *Ahkam* (Regulations) that govern the entire life of a Muslim in all its ramifications.

Aqeedah: The roots of faith

This series of articles aim at providing a sound understanding of the *Aqeedah.* This knowledge is the root of a Muslim's faith.

The practical course to which our life must conform derives from our knowledge of the Creed of Islam.

Knowledge

The first requisite, therefore, for being a true, practicing Muslim is knowledge.

In the light of the above it is evident that if the root of our faith is shallow, our practice of Islam can only amount to an exhibition of ceremonialism and a negation of Islam as a complete code of life.

It is the clarity and soundness of belief, based on profound knowledge and reason, that will in turn give substance and meaning to our practical conduct.

It is hoped that knowledge of our *Aqeedah* will imbue the Muslim youth with a living consciousness of and a reverence for the Creator, Almighty Allah. It is also hoped that the values and concepts portrayed will inspire them to exert themselves to the utmost to conform to the code of life as promulgated by Islam.

Moral Crisis

It is widely known and commonly accepted that inspite of the remarkable scientific and technological achievements of humanity today, it is going through a moral crisis. there is an emptiness in his life despite the comforts and luxuries that science is yielding to him

Expediency dominates his actions. Material greed motivates him. Reverence for the Creator and devotion to eternal truths count for very little. In the material domain the achievements of man have been stupendous, but in the moral domain he has been an utter failure. It is as the Qur'an has warned us :

"By (the token of) Time (through the ages),
Verily man is in a state of loss,
Except such as have faith,
And do righteous deeds,
And counsel one another to follow the Truth,
And counsel one another to be steadfast and patient." (Surah Al-'Asr, 103)

Importance of Correct Belief

From this warning of the Qur'an the importance of correct belief as a prerequisite for the right course of action is quite clear.

Belief determines an attitude which in turn leads to a certain course of action. Inculcate in our youth the right belief and we have bequeathed to them the most priceless possession

For this reason the attempt is made here to transmit the correct values as expounded by the Qur'an and exemplified by our beloved leader, Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him).

Values

Ibn Khaldun [the great Islamic thinker] was greatly aware of the supreme importance of inculcating Islamic values in our impressionable youth when he said:

".....the things one is taught in one's youth take root more deeply than anything else. They are the basis of all later knowledge. The first impression the heart receives is, in a way, the foundation of all habits. The character of the foundation determines the condition of the building."

This series will be serialized monthly in The Muslim Voice, InshaAllah. Part Two may be found below.

Islamic Aqeedah

Part Two: Basic Tenants & Tawhid

BY SHEIKH FAISAL ABDUR-RAZAK

2.1 Praise be to Almighty Allah, Lord of the entire Universe. In His Hand is the Dominion of the heavens and the earth. I testify that there is none to be worshipped but Almighty Allah. He is One, He has no partners, and there is none like unto Him. And I testify that Muhammad is His Servant and Messenger

2.2 This is the second article in the series dealing with *Aqeedah* (the Islamic creed).

In the first installment we introduced the subject of Aqeedah and mentioned its importance and significance in the life of a Muslim. This article deals with the basic tenets of *Islam* and *Iman,* and introduces some elements of *Tawheed*

2.3 Because of their conceptual importance, we draw your attention once again to the following Ayaat (verses), for purposes of emphasising the concepts contained therein.

Almighty Allah reveals to us in the Holy Qur'an .

"I have not created Jinn and Mankind except to serve Me " [51:56]

"And to every people We sent a prophet to convey to them that they must serve Allah alone and avoid all evil (*Taahghoot*) ." [16.36]

The Pillars

2.4 There are five Pillars of Islam These are:

1 To bear witness that there is no god but Allah, and that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah.
2 To establish Salaah (Prayer).
3. To give Zakaat (Annual Charity).
4 To observe Fast in the month of Ramadaan
5. To perform Hajj (Pilgrimage).

In a Hadith, Abdullah, the son of Umar Ibn Al-Khattab (may Allah be pleased with them), said: I heard the Messenger of Allah (may the blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) say:

"Islam has been built on five pillars: testifying that there is no god but Allah and that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah, establishing the Prayers, paying the Zakaat, making the pilgrimage to the House, and Fasting in Ramadaan." (It was related by Imam Al-Bukhari and Imam Muslim.)

Each of these Tenets will be discussed in detail in future installments

Pillars of Iman (Faith)

2.5 There are six Pillars of Imaan (Islamic belief, faith). These are: To believe in

1 Allah
2. Angels
3 His Books (Revelations
4 His Messengers
5 The Last Day
6 Divine Destiny, both the good and evil thereof.

In the famous *Hadith Jibreel,* narrated by Ibn Umar, reported by Imam Muslim in his *Sahih Muslim,* the Archangel Jibreel (peace be upon him) came to the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) and asked him: "Tell me what is Imaan?" The Prophet (pbuh) answered:

"It is to believe in Allah, His Angels, His Books, His Messengers, and the Last Day, and to believe in divine destiny, both the good and the evil thereof."

The Angel Jibreel said: "You have spoken rightly."

In addition, Almighty Allah says in the Qur'an:

"It is not righteousness that you turn your faces towards east or west; But it is righteousness:- To believe in Allah, and the Last Day, and the Angels, and the Book, and the Messengers." [2:177]

"O you who believe! Believe in Allah, and the Revelation [Book] which He sent to His Apostle, and the Revelation which He sent to those before (him). Anyone who denies Allah, His Angels, His Books, His Messengers, and the Day of Judgement, has certainly gone far, far astray." [4:136]

"The Messenger believes in what has been revealed to him from his Lord, as do the men of Faith Each one of them believes in Allah, His Angels, His Books, and His Messengers We make no distinction (they say) between one and another of His Messengers ' And they say: 'We hear and we obey; (We seek) your forgiveness, Our Lord, and to You is the end of all journeys."' [2:285]

It is therefore absolutely clear what the Pillars of Imaan are. It is on the basis of these six principles that Messengers and Prophets (peace and blessings be upon them all) were sent to mankind and Revelations were revealed by Almighty Allah to these Messengers and Prophets.

The Kalimas

Articles of Faith Codified

2.6 We conclude this article by listing the *Kalimas* (Codifications of the articles of faith), as developed by earlier Islamic Scholars.

1. **Kalimat-ut-Tayyiba**
(The Holy Code)

There is none worthy of worship except Allah, and Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah.

2. **Kalimat-ush-Shahadah**
(The Cody of Evidence)

I bear witness that there is none worthy of worship except Allah, and I bear witness that Muhammad is His servant and Messenger.

3. **Kalimat-ut-Tamjeed**
(The Code of Exaltation)

All glory and praise be to Allah. There is none worthy of worship but Allah. Allah is the greatest. There is no power and no might but in Allah, the Exalted One, the Greatest.

4 **Kalimat-ut-Tawheed**
(The Code of the Unicity of God)

There is none worthy of worship but Allah. He is one and has no partner. His is the kingdom and Dominion (of the whole universe) and to Him is due all praise. He gives life and He takes life. All good is in His hand And He has power over all things.

5. **Imaan-i-Mufassal**
(Code of Iman in Detail)

I believe in Allah, His Angels, His Books, His Messengers, the Last Day, divine destiny, both the good and evil thereof, and in Resurrection after death.

6. **Iman-i-Mujmal**
(Code of Iman in Brief)

I believe in Allah, as He is, with all His beautiful Names and Attributes, and I accept all His injunctions

This is Part Two of a continuing series. Part Three will be published in the next issue of The Muslim Voice. The Muslim Voice, InshaAllah.

Crisis in the Muslim Mind

A Thought-provoking Analysis of the State of the Ummah

BOOK REVIEW:

Crisis in the Muslim Mind
By Abdull Hamid AbuSulayman,
International Institute of Islamic Thought (IIIT),
160 pp, 1994.

By Tharas Hollyer

There is agreement amongst Muslims that the Muslim world is in a crisis politically, economically, and socially.

Although Muslims have taken the initiative to respond to these challenges, these responses have not proven enough to lift Muslims out of their dependance on countries and institutions who could really care less about whether or not Muslims live or die (take Bosnia, for example).

In pondering the current state of the *Ummah* (Muslim World Community), any Muslim with a conscience is compelled to ask: "Where did it all go wrong in the first place? How do we get out of this state we are in?" A question that needs answering, no doubt.

Islamization

Enter *Crisis in the Muslim Mind* by Abdull-Hamid AbuSulayman. This book is not written by a novice. Dr. AbuSulayman has served as the General Secretary of the World Assembly of Muslim Youth (WAMY), is a founding member of the Association of Muslim Social Sciences (AMSS), and is both Director of the International Institute of Islamic Thought (IIIT) and the Rector of the Islamic University of Malaysia. No doubt a busy man.

The book *Crisis in the Muslim Mind* represents a cornerstone work in IIIT's "Islamization of Knowledge" megaproject.

Labelled as "Modernist" by some, hailed as much-needed "Reformers" or "Revivalists" by others, IIIT has published a number of important works dealing with Islamic perspectives on sociology, economics, and thought, in hopes of re-establishing Muslims at the forefront of contemporary thought. *[For more on the Islamization of Knowledge project of IIIT, see articles on the subject in the November and December 1994 issues of The Muslim Voice - Ed.]*

Need for Serious Discussion

In the preface to the English edition, the author writes that the work is intended "... Toward the initiation of serious discussion amongst Muslim intellectuals regarding the roots of the malaise of contemporary Muslim society..."

AbuSulayman also writes that the subject matter is sometimes hard to follow. On both counts, AbuSulayman delivers: this book is *not* an easy read.

Although the book is well-organized in content and progression, AbuSulayman becomes repetitive at times, and sometimes says things without explaining them at first, leaving the reader initially confused. Eventually, explanations are generally offered. However the presentation would have been easier to follow if AbuSulayman had explained himself when he introduced a concept.

The book is conceptually divided into two parts. The first deals with the diagnosis of the problem and an assessment of the current state of Islamic thought, and will be the focus of this review. This represents the major gem of the book. The second part could be considered a blueprint for tackling the task of Muslim reconstruction.

The Roots of the Crisis

In explaining the roots of the problem, AbuSulayman provides an explanation of not merely the point in time where the Muslim mind was opened up to decline--the fall of the true Khilafah after Ali ibn Abu Talib--but also the actions of the Muslim intelligentsia that sealed the path to decay up to the present day.

Specifically, AbuSulayman states that the withdrawal of Islamic scholars from public life left the Islamic State in the hands of those who were Islamically and otherwise incompetent to effectively rule Muslims.

This retreat of the scholars from the forefront of everyday life, however willingly or forced (keep in mind the persecution of Imam Malik, Ibn Taymiyya and others), resulted in a general unwillingness by scholars to make and hold opinions regarding affairs of state, international relations, economics, and social policy, these being guarded jealously and brutally by some corrupt Muslim rulers to this very day.

To further his point, AbuSulayman uses the example to the Uthmaniyyah (Ottoman) Khilafah and its disintegration into a nationalistic police state, followed by the formation of present day Turkey. Despite its so-called "progress" over the years, AbuSulayman rightly points out the sad fact that Turkey is even today sniffed at by its Western idols as the "Sick Man of Europe."

Approaches to the Crisis

This analysis sets the stage for a definition of three distinct approaches that Muslims used or should use in hopes of elevating them out of the basement of world thought.

The first, defined as the *Foreign/Imported Solution*, characterized by Turkey and Egypt, could most accurately be given the analogy of a baby being punished: after being spanked by its parent, it cries, and opens its arms in hopes of a parental embrace. Unlike Turkey and Egypt, though, the baby learns fast not to use this approach (this is my analogy, not AbuSulayman's).

The second approach, defined as the *Imitative Historical Approach*, is characterized by the love of certain groups to, as AbuSulayman puts it, "...maintain the façade of Islam's Golden Age..." An obvious critique of certain movements, no doubt.

The third approach, named by AbuSulayman as the *Islamic Analah Approach*. This is AbuSulayman's pet project, and he spends the rest of the book outlining it.

This part of the book alone should impress Muslims of all stripes.

Beyond the Approaches: Application

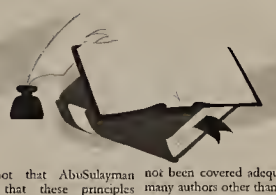
But that's where it ends. In a chapter entitled "The Traditinal Methodology of Islamic Thought Assessment and Critique," AbuSulayman offers an analysis of the fundamentals of *fiqh* (jurispudence) such as qiyas (analogy), naskh (abrogation), and ijma' (consensus) that would anger many traditional scholars enough depth for the reader to figure out what he exactly means when he states that certain fundamentals of fiqh just are not relevant anymore.

This is a trend that continues as the book progresses: it is at its deepest at the start, and progressively shallower at the end, much like a swimming pool.

Still, the first part of this book does contain many important concepts, some of which have not been covered adequately by many authors other than AbuSulayman, and for that alone he deseves full credit.

Tharas Hollyer is a PhD student at the U of Toronto (StGeorge) and is involved with the MSA. He embodies the Winnipeg alternative.

The book is divided into two parts. The first is a diagnosis of the problem and an assessment of the current state of Islamic thought... This represents the major gem of the book. The second part is a blueprint for tackling the task of Muslim reconstruction.



Its not that AbuSulayman thinks that these principles should be done away with, but his ideas of how to reform these concepts are not always well explained.

Sadly, in the most important part of the book AbuSulayman does not cover his ideas in

Editor's Response

Without going into a detailed criticism of Tharas' critique of the second part of AbuSulayman's book, I would like to make the following points:

Regarding the fact that the book is hard to read, we should keep in mind that this book is meant for people (such as Tharas!) who have a certain amount of knowledge of the topics he is covering. AbuSulayman is more concerned about analyzing that with giving explanations.

While AbuSulayman's points regarding the need to reform Islamic fiqh methodology are bold (and would be disliked by many), his position is clear -- the need to have an evolved methodology for the application of fiqhi principles in the light of our changing circumstances. His argument that the methodology of our predecessors is more important than their specific rulings -- many of which are bound by time and space factors -- is a serious one worthy of much thought.

AbuSulayman does not argue that the classical fiqhi principles should be done away with; he argues for a more nuanced methodology for their systematic application. This is an part of the whole drive of IIIT's 'Islamization of Knowledge' project.

- Faraz Rabbani

Remembrance of Allah

The Prophet of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, used to say the following du`a as he left his house:

In the Name of Allah (I go out); I place my trust in Allah! O Allah, I seek refuge in You from being made to stumble, from straying and from being made to stray, from doing wrong and from being wronged by others, and from misunderstanding and from being misunderstood.

(Bismillah. Tawakkaltu `ala Allah. Allahumma inni a`udho bika min an azilla au uzilla; au adhilla au udhilla; au adhlima au udhlama; au ajhala au ujhala `alayya.)

Ref: Remembrance & Prayer (Muhammad al-Ghazali)

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Struggle and Patience

Building a Community on the Basis of Faith

By Abdul-Rehman Malik

Imam Nafa Zahar-Eddine is dead. On November 6, 1994 he was deported back to his native Algeria by the French government, because he spoke out against the ban on wearing the hijab in France.

Upon his arrival in Algiers, Imam Zahar was arrested by Algerian security forces. Twelve days later, after being beaten and held in solitary confinement, he died. Imam Nafa Zahar Eddine was thirty-two years old. To Allah we belong and to Allah we return.

Imam Zahar Eddine is not alone. Tens of thousands of Islamic workers and activists across the world have been killed over the past decade. Thousands more languish in prison cells, while others continue to remain in hiding or in exile. Many of their stories are similar.

International human rights groups like Amnesty International and Africa Watch report that when in prison Islamists are victims of extreme and brutal torture and persecution. The families of Islamic workers are harassed and rarely told in what condition their relative is being held.

Furthermore, a recent Amnesty International report entitled "Tunisia: Women victims of harassment, torture and imprisonment" (June 1993), details the shocking terror campaign being carried out against Muslim women in Tunisia. (A copy of the report is available by contacting *The Muslim Voice*.)

Many of us may not realize it, but Muslim women are now often at the forefront of Islamic work, while this report only tells the stories of a few women, thousands of others suffer similar persecution and torture.

Yet against all these odds, the work continues. Our brothers and sisters continue to give their lives in the struggle for the establishment of peace and justice through Islam.

What about us?

But, what does all this have to do with community building at the University of Toronto?

Allah tells us in the Qur'an about the believers who said, "Oh Lord! We have heard the call of one calling to faith, 'Believe in your Lord', and we have believed. Our Lord! Forgive us our sins, blot out from us our iniquities, and take to Yourself our souls in the company of the righteous. Our Lord! Grant us what You did promise us through Your messengers, and save us from shame on the Day of Judgement. For you never break your promise. And their Lord accepted of them their prayer and answered them: 'Never will I suffer to be lost the work of any of you, be they male or female. You are members one of another. Those who have left their homes, or were driven out there from, or suffered harm in my cause, or fought and were slain --- truly, I will blot out from their iniquities, and admit them into gardens with rivers flowing underneath; a reward from the presence of God, and from God's presence is the best of rewards." (*Al-Imran*, 3: 193-195)

Allah has given us in these verses a pattern of behaviour that will lead to success in this life and the hereafter. What we must realize is that struggle and work in the way of Allah is never lost since Allah never allows our work to be in vain.

The believers in these verses not only state their commitment to Allah, but they manifest that faith through action and practical application. Allah speaks about those who sacrificed and suffered as the successful ones, so where does that leave us?

We as sisters and brothers have a duty to one another and to the Muslim community at large. We are ordered by Allah and the Prophet Muhammad to build and enjoin a community that is just and a community that calls to righteousness.

The Path of Struggle

The path to establishing such a community is not easy. Our sisters and brothers in Tunisia, Algeria, Palestine and many other places are sacrificing their lives, families and wealth in this very cause. Alhamdulillah, Allah has saved us from such hardship and trial. He has provided us with an environment where we can struggle towards Islam in peace and stability.

Yet, it often feels that the challenges are insurmountable and the odds are against us. These verses and the examples of the worldwide Islamic Ummah show that with patient struggle Allah will make our cause successful and give us aid in all that we do.

If we truly love and fear Allah as He should be feared, and if we truly care for our fellow Muslims as the Allah and His Messenger commanded us to do, then we would soon realize that every step we take towards establishing Islam in our own lives and within the Muslim community will be seen by Allah, and Allah will not let any of our efforts, large or small, go to waste.

Bearing in Patience

At the recent MAYA Conference in Chicago, I met a brother from the Maghreb who spoke about the status of Islamic work there. He spoke about the suffering and adversity the Islamic workers are facing there, but inspite of all the painful descriptions of what was happening he advised the brothers and sisters, both here and abroad, to be patient. I was surprised by his approach; I felt angered by his exhortation to patience, feeling that what was needed to solve the problem was force.

I was later told that the brother had spent several years in prison, where he was tortured and abused. On his release from prison, several years ago, he was unable to walk and later went into exile. When I learned of this I cried. After his experience the brother could have been angry or bitter, but he was not. His words echoed the trust in Allah and commitment to His cause which the verses above describe. It is a story on which we should all reflect.

While I write about the exhortation to patience and struggle, there are thousands of people, like this brother and Imam Zahar, who have chosen to live it.

May Allah give us the strength to follow the deen as it should be followed and We ask Him to make us among the patient and raise us in the company of the righteous on the Day of Judgement. Ameen.

Abdul-Rehman is the ideologue of the MSA at the University of Toronto (St. George), and its Amir. He has written in the last 21 issues of The Muslim Voice.

History of Chechen Resistance

Update on Chechen Resistance to Russian Occupation

Location

Chechen Caucasus is a mountainous region located between the Caspian Sea and the Black Sea inhabited by about 50 different ethnic groups, most of whom are overwhelmingly Muslim.

The region was occupied by Czarist Russia in the 19th Century but always maintained its reputation as the most rebellious region in both the Russian Empire and later the Soviet Union.

Resistance

When the Soviet Union collapsed in 1991, Chechenya was the first state in the Russian Federation to declare its independence from Moscow and has ruled itself for the last three years.

Chechenya has encouraged neighboring Muslim countries to breakaway from Moscow but until now no other state in the Russian part of the Caucasus has declared its independence.

The current conflict in Chechenya comes almost a century and a half after Russia's imperial army conquered the Cheehens after 70 years of fierce Islamist-led resistance.

Czarist forces massacred 400,000 Chechens at that time. Even after coming under Russian occupation, the Chechen's frequent uprisings has created a lasting Russian perception of the Chechens as the most rebellious ethnic group living under Russian occupation.

Oppression

In the 1940's, Stalin tried to wipe the Chechens off the map and he deported more than a million of them to Central Asia.

The Soviet dissident Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn described the Chechens with whom he shared barracks in Stalin's prison camps in his book *The Gulag Archipelago*. Solzhenitsyn wrote: "There was one nation that refused to succumb to the philosophy of submission - not individual rebels, but an entire nation: The Chechens.

Never and nowhere have the Chechens tried to please the camp bosses: On the contrary, they have remained proud and even hostile to the administration."

Enmity

The age-old enmity which Chechens share for their former occupier has rallied strong support to Dzokar Dudyev, the President of the Muslim Republic.

A number of Muslim volunteers from other Caucasus regions have also come to Chechenya to join the fight against Russia.

Duddayev has also vowed to introduce the Shariah in Chechenya and has called upon all Muslims in the Caucasus to unite into one Islamic state.

The foreign minister of Chechenya issued a tough response to Yeltsin's threat to invade the country.

"The Soviet Union could not crush Afghanistan. Russia is nobody now but they want to have another Afghanistan," taunted Chechen's Jordanian-born Foreign Minister Shamsedin Yusuf. "I think Yeltsin was drunk when he did this. This is one of the mad things he had done before."

"He has not read Chechen history," Shamsedin added referring to the years of war between Russia and the Muslims of the Caucasus.

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Some people wear "I love Islam" on their caps instead of wearing it on their hearts.

Zahir Arshad Bacchus, Friday, January 6th, 1995. Toronto.